

Congratulatory Address
by
Prof Khehla Ndlovu,
VUT Vice Chancellor and Principal
on the occasion of
Chancellor's Installation Luncheon
06 June 2024 | Riverside Hotel | 13:00

Program Director: Prof Christa Grobler: Executive Dean: Faculty of Applied and Computer Sciences

- Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande (in absentia)
- VUT Chancellor: Mr Zwelibanzi Vincent Mntambo
- Chairperson of Council: Prof Mandla Radebe
- Deputy Chairperson of Council: Ms Jackie Manche
- Other Members of Council present
- Members of the VUT Management Committee; Executive Deans and Extended Management.
- Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Chancellor of Nelson Mandela University (NMU) and Chairperson of the Thabo Mbeki Board of Trustees.
- Member of the South African Judiciary: Advocate Leah Qcabashe SC
- Executive Mayor of Emfuleni Local Municipality: Cllr Siphon Radebe
- Executive Mayor of Midvaal Local Municipality: Cllr Peter Teixeira
- CEO of Exxaro: Dr Nombasa Tsengwa
- Director General of the Department of Tourism: Mr Victor Tharage
- Representatives from the Universities South Africa (USAf)
- Distinguished Guests from other universities
- Academic and Administrative Heads of Department at VUT
- Representatives of various structures at VUT including: Senate; Institutional Forum; Convocation; SRC; Official Labour Unions: NEHAWU and NTEU
- Beloved VUT Staff and Students in our midst
- Our Industry Partners
- Friends of VUT
- Esteemed Guests
- The Task Team that worked tirelessly to ensure the success of this day, led by Prof Linington.
- All Protocol Observed

Program Director, quite a mouthful has already been said by the great speakers who came before me including Advocate Leah Qcabashe, as well as Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, who gave a befitting keynote address earlier this morning at the Desmond Tutu Great Hall. But be that as it may, I must confess that besides the fact that my name is on the program, there was no way I was going to let this moment pass without me adding my voice to the chorus of congratulating Mr Zwelibanzi Vincent Mntambo on his official installation as the Chancellor of the Vaal University of Technology.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me start by indicating that for some time now, VUT has been without a Chancellor. Therefore, this is a day of great significance for us where we gather as the VUT Community and Friends of VUT to celebrate that we now officially have one! As we embark on this new chapter, may we spare a moment to appreciate the legacy of our past Chancellors: Mr Tokyo Sexwale, Advocate Pansy Hlakula and Dr Xolani Mkhwanazi who laid the important building blocks for what was then a young and thriving University of Technology. Mr Mntambo, I have no doubt that these great giants have left a solid foundation during their respective tenures, on which you can stand firm as you take over the reins. Let us honor their contributions and pledge to build upon their legacy with renewed vigor.

Speaking of great giants, Mr Chancellor, your credentials speak for themselves, and I believe that your tenure as VUT Chancellor will be nothing short of exponential growth for the institution. Your wealth of experience in public service and leadership roles across the business sector, uniquely position you to propel us to new heights. Over and above your extensive expertise and leadership within the business community, what stands out for me is your deep understanding of South Africa's higher education landscape coupled with a profound commitment to academic excellence and a compassionate appreciation of the transformative power of education.

I believe these attributes are what is needed to spearhead VUT into a promising era of growth as well as challenge us to push the boundaries of what is possible. Your forward-thinking vision for the country's higher education aligns perfectly with the core values of our university and complements our dedication to making knowledge and learning accessible to all, as well as fostering young leaders who will advance societal interests through technological innovation, excellence, and inclusive growth.

This installation coincides with VUT's celebration of twenty years as a University of Technology this year. It was in 2004 when we saw the restructuring of the higher education landscape, leading to the birth of VUT and many others. Since then, the institution has seen significant growth in its activities and reach. **Reaching two decades is no small feat, and I think that deserves a round of applause!** Most importantly, such anniversaries are not only moments to reflect on past achievements but also to look forward to future advancements and contributions to the world of technology and academia. Time permitting, I would like to make a few reflections on our 20 years:

1. Academic Achievements and Graduate Success:

Throughout the years, VUT has and continues to offer an expansive catalogue of industry tailored undergraduate and postgraduate programmes which span the fields of Applied and Computer Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Human Sciences and Management Sciences. Our innovative learning method facilitated by committed and esteemed thought leaders is the reason our institution has remained a reputable contributor to the country's knowledge edifice over the two decades. At every chance we get, we proudly celebrate our esteemed alumni by shining a spotlight on their invaluable contributions in diverse fields locally and internationally. From groundbreaking innovations to transformative leadership roles, our alumni exemplify the embodiment of our institution's commitment to nurturing talent and fostering lifelong connections.

2. An incubator of techno-entrepreneurial graduates and innovators

Located in a historical industrial hub, our vision is "To foster Learning and Innovation for a Digitally Smart and Sustainable Industrial Progress and Socio-Economic Transformation." Our mission is to produce techno-entrepreneurial graduates and innovators who will serve as catalysts for a vibrant transformation of a flourishing and sustainable society, industry, and commerce. To achieve this, we provide technology-enhanced teaching and learning, quality living and learning communities, high-impact research and innovation that contributes to solving society and industry challenges.

3. Innovation and Research:

With several centres of excellence and NRF-rated professors, we pride ourselves with being associated with world-class academics and researchers who not only produce groundbreaking research that solves real life problems, but also empower aspiring researchers to engage the most experienced minds in several research fields.

We are the only university in South Africa that fully owns a **Science and Technology Park** which is home to the Technology Transfer and Innovation – a strategic technology hub that endeavors to promote SMMEs and industrial competitiveness. Its strategic location (Sebokeng), available infrastructure as well as the current entrepreneurial culture make it an ideal implementing agency for driving regional government programmes within the Southern Gauteng region.

The **VUT Law Clinic** which is also housed at the same precinct, offers free legal services to the indigent members of the Emfuleni community on matters related to Domestic Violence, Maintenance, Divorces, Drafting of Wills, Children's Court, Social justice issues such as the right to housing and unlawful evictions as well as labour related issues especially unfair labour practices.

4. Industry Partnerships:

The university proactively forges collaborations with industries to ensure relevance and applicability of education and research. These relationships with partners from industry, commerce, professional bodies and communities across South Africa also enrich our academic and research endeavors and enhance the value of our qualifications.

Just last week, we hosted the Golden Triangle Chamber of Commerce Members Meeting on campus to highlight the vibrant relationship we have with the local business community. VUT is not just an academic institution; it is a cornerstone of this community, and we are dedicated to fostering an environment where businesses can thrive alongside educational excellence.

5. Community Engagement

The need to foster meaningful relationships between academic institutions and their surrounding communities, has been a focal point of discussion over the years. Through our Department of Community Engagement, VUT continues to play a crucial role in promoting social responsibility, civic engagement, and sustainable development in the broader surrounding communities to create a positive impact and reciprocal and mutual learning for the benefit of social humanity. In addition to giving back to the community, such initiatives are aligned to, and underpinned by one of the University's strategic pillars of Socially Engaged Scholarship.

Ladies and Gentlemen, without further ado let me do what I was assigned to do.

Mr Mntambo, it is my honour and pleasure to congratulate you on your official installation as Chancellor of our University. I believe I speak for the entire VUT Community when I say we warmly welcome you as the titular head of our institution for the next five years. We look up to your elevation and consummation of your relationship with our institution with great expectations and optimism for the future.

We wish nothing but sufficient prosperity for your Chancellorship to enable us to realize our dreams and ambitions as an institution. Indeed, we have big dreams as VUT, but what we don't have are the material resources to turn them into reality. We therefore hope to ride on your extensive business acumen and powerful networks to significantly enhance VUT's brand visibility and influence both locally and globally, but most importantly unlock the resources we so desperately need.

May I close, by once again extending my sincere congratulations and by giving you my honest pledge to work with you alongside Council, Management and all our stakeholders for the betterment of VUT.

I THANK YOU.